

Implementing Self-Defense Training and Legal Assistance to Prevent Sexual Violence in Pesantren Environments

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Abstract

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are crucial environments that should ensure the safety and well-being of their students. However, reports of sexual violence incidents involving students, particularly perpetrated by teachers or educators within the pesantren, have raised serious concerns. This community service initiative aims to mitigate such issues through a program focused on self-defense training and legal support. Implemented using the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) method, the program involved 30 male and female students from Pondok Pesantren Ussyqaqul Qur'an Kendal. Evaluation of the program's impact revealed significant outcomes: 95% achievement of training objectives, 98% achievement of material delivery targets, an 87% improvement in students' understanding of sexual violence issues, and 90% satisfaction among students regarding the program's effectiveness and enjoyment. These results underscore the program's success in enhancing students' awareness and preparedness concerning sexual violence prevention in pesantren settings.

Keywords: *Self-defense training; Sexual violence prevention; Islamic boarding schools; Legal Assistance*

Introduction

Pesantren, the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, embodies traditional Indonesian Islam, which has stood the test of time and remains relevant today. Pesantren plays a central role in Islamic education in the Muslim world, particularly in Indonesia. They are integral to the face of Islamic education, with many national leaders and scholars emerging from pesantren backgrounds. Initially, pesantren

became an integral part of Islamic education since the arrival of the Islamic community in Indonesia. This presence is closely related to the process of Islamization, involving the adaptation and integration with existing local beliefs, resulting in a phenomenon of syncretism or acculturation (Hidayat, 2019; El-Wakil, 2016). The process of Islamization spread through various channels, including trade, marriage, education, and cultural or artistic aspects (Zamzami, 2018). In the educational context, pesantren emerged as active institutions that continue to thrive within the community, becoming inseparable from cultural identity. Pesantren have played significant roles throughout history, from resisting colonialism to their involvement in maintaining independence (Fauzi, 2020).

One of the distinct advantages of pesantren over other educational institutions is its holistic approach to education. They focus not only on imparting knowledge in both general and religious contexts but also on teaching the meaning of life. Santri (students) in pesantren are regarded as individuals prepared to face life's journey (Rahmawati, 2021). As of 2023, the number of pesantren has significantly increased in rural, suburban, and urban areas. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2023, there are 39.600 pesantren with over 4.8 million santri across Indonesia (Ministry of Religious Affairs 2023). Despite this, pesantren are not immune to issues prevalent in society, particularly sexual violence. Sexual violence within pesantren environments necessitates introspection within Islamic educational institutions. The assumption that pesantren are inherently safe spaces is challenged by the prevalence of sexual violence against children and women, which requires serious attention and handling by various parties. This issue remains significant due to the many cases of sexual violence that go unreported or are covered up for various reasons (Murtadho, 2022)

From January 1 to February 21, 2022, there were 1.440 reported cases of sexual violence. Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) from 2007 to 2021 shows fluctuating numbers of violence cases. In 2016, there were

259.150 cases, increasing to 431.471 cases in 2019. In 2020, the number of reported violence cases decreased to 299.911, and further declined to 10.247 cases in 2021 (Komnas Perempuan, 2022). However, the reduction in reported cases does not guarantee a decrease in sexual violence incidents. At the end of 2021, Indonesia was shocked by cases of 21 santri raped by a pesantren teacher, followed by reports of sexual violence by a pesantren educator who raped 26 students. These crimes occurred from June 2020 to August 2021. The latest case involved the rape of 15 female students over two years by a pesantren owner in Jombang, East Java (Santoso, 2023). Therefore, serious measures and comprehensive preventive efforts are needed to address sexual violence in pesantren.

Common forms of sexual violence occurring in pesantren involve actions such as coercion, seduction, pushing, hugging, groping, or any form of harassment of body parts, aiming to force victims into sexual relations (Bernstein et al., 2010). Pesantren can be enclosed spaces if the management is not sensitive to efforts to prevent sexual violence.

Self-defense training and legal assistance are essential in preventing sexual violence in pesantren. These measures aim to raise awareness, strengthen individual autonomy, and prepare individuals to face the risk of sexual violence. Self-defense training can increase confidence, teach prevention tactics, and ultimately reduce the risk of sexual violence in pesantren. Legal assistance provides victims with access to legal protection, ensuring that they are supported and their rights are upheld. The primary objectives of self-defense training include boosting confidence, understanding preventive tactics, and reducing the risk of sexual violence in pesantren. The benefits of legal assistance encompass access to legal protection for victims, helping them navigate the legal system, and ensuring their rights are protected.

Despite the existence of Law No. 18 of 2019 on pesantren, which regulates the facilitation, recognition, and empowerment of Pesantren, there are no detailed provisions on preventing and handling sexual crimes within pesantren (UU No. 18/2019). The Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued Regulation No. 73 of 2022 on Preventing and

Handling Sexual Violence in Educational Institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Permenag No. 73/2022). However, there is still a need for serious measures and comprehensive policies to prevent sexual violence in pesantren. Preventive actions must include monitoring and evaluating related facilities in each pesantren and establishing complaint facilities within the pesantren environment. Further regulations, either through laws or government or ministerial decrees, are needed to address these issues in more detail (Syamsudin, 2023).

One preventive measure that pesantren managers and implementers can take to avoid sexual violence within pesantren is to provide self-defense training and legal assistance. This aims to raise awareness among students about sexual violence issues and enhance vigilance as a preventive measure against sexual violence in pesantren, creating a responsive and safe environment within pesantren social life (Lattimore, 1951; Morey & Yakin, 2011). Based on the above discussion, researchers are interested in conducting a service project aimed at providing self-defense training and legal assistance as a preventive measure against sexual violence in pesantren.

Method

This service project employs the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) approach, which focuses on empowering communities by identifying and utilizing existing strengths and assets (Samsuri et al., 2021a); Mathie & Cuningham, 2003). The ABCD approach emphasizes leveraging community assets and potentials (Swasono et al., 2020; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). These assets and sustainable programs are crucial resources for effecting changes that enhance the quality of community support. This community service initiative acts as a catalyst in realizing such transformations.

The site chosen for this community service project is Pondok Pesantren Usysyaqul Qur'an, located in Kendal Regency, specifically in Kauman, Kutoharjo, Kaliwungu District, Kendal Regency, Central Java. This pesantren accommodates male and female students spanning diverse age groups, from junior high school (SMP) and high school (SMA) levels to university levels. This diversity represents a significant

asset, particularly in the context of preventing sexual violence within the pesantren environment. Students of varying ages possess differing levels of understanding regarding the concept of sexual violence. These varying levels of awareness, combined with the fact that sexual violence is rarely discussed and often considered taboo in pesantren settings, have motivated the team to undertake this service project. The aim is to equip students with increased awareness regarding gender concepts and issues related to sexual violence (Bernstein et al., 2010; Lattimore, 1951). The ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) method involves five key steps in the mentoring process:

a. Inkulturasi Stage

The inkulturasi stage is where the mentoring team introduces and understands the potential within the community (Agmal, 2021). During this stage, the service team visits the Usysyaqul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School to explain the purpose and goals of the project, aiming to establish trust with the community.

b. Discovery Stage

The discovery stage involves a deeper exploration of the positive aspects within the community, also known as asset mapping. After gathering data from the Inkulturasi stage, the service team identifies and maps assets and potentials based on the collected data (Swasono et al., 2020). This step is crucial for identifying potentials that need to be strengthened to support change.

c. Design Stage

The design stage occurs after identifying the community's potentials (Samsuri et al., 2021). The service team designs a program relevant to the identified assets. At Usysyaqul Qur'an, the designed program includes self-defense training and legal assistance as efforts to prevent and address sexual violence. The program is systematically and engagingly designed to enhance understanding of sexual violence and its prevention.

d. Define Stage

The define stage involves implementing the designed program. The service team collaborates with mentoring partners to commit to and

collaborate throughout the implementation. The self-defense training and legal assistance program is conducted through a two-day Forum Group Discussion (FGD) on October 14-15, 2023, involving 30 mentored students (15 males and 15 females). During the program, the mentoring team also receives feedback from students regarding their experiences or understanding of sexual violence and the necessary legal assistance in such cases.

e. Reflection Stage

The reflection stage is the final evaluation of the implemented program. The asset-based approach requires a baseline study, monitoring of progress, and outcome evaluation. In this stage, participants are asked to fill out questionnaires to evaluate their understanding of the material presented (Austen, 2011)

Result

In the initial phase of implementation, on Sunday, October 1, 2023, the community engagement team conducted an inculturation activity. The team began by visiting Pondok Usysyaqul Qur'an in Kendal, where they met with the caretaker, K.H Ali Muchtar, L.C., M.A., to discuss the purpose and objectives of the community engagement initiative. This initial meeting aimed to establish trust and rapport with the community, particularly the students (santri), regarding their involvement in the project. Additionally, the team gained insights into the existing assets at Pondok Usysyaqul Qur'an through this interaction. During this phase, the team also attempted to assess the potential available at the engagement site based on the provided data.

Subsequently, on Monday, October 2, 2023, the team entered the discovery phase. During this stage, they identified and mapped out the assets based on the collected data. Furthermore, they analyzed strategies to address the identified issues. Based on their visit, the team gathered information revealing that the pesantren accommodates male and female teenage students who have reached puberty. Moreover, discussions on sexual violence are rarely addressed within the pesantren community, including among the students. This observation underscores the significance of addressing these issues through the community

engagement initiative. The following are initial findings from surveys distributed to the students by the team.

Table. 1

Initial Survey Results from Students

No	Indicator	Survey Results
1	Understanding of issues related to Sexual Violence	80% have not understood
2	Discussion about Sexual Violence in the Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren)	98% not discussed
3	Awareness of acts that constitute sexual violence	75% are aware
4	Knowledge of actions to take if experiencing or witnessing sexual violence	60% are aware

The next stage is the design phase, which follows the discovery phase. This involves creating a work plan through a program developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. On Friday, October 6, 2023, based on the data gathered, the community service team designed a program aimed at providing new insights and information regarding sexual violence prevention in the Islamic boarding school environment. This enhanced understanding was achieved by organizing a Forum Group Discussion with guest speakers to educate the students about sexual violence.

The fourth stage is the define phase, where all parties collaborate to support the program initiated by the community service team. During its implementation, the team conducted a two-day Forum Group Discussion from October 14-15, 2023, involving 30 students, comprising 15 males and 15 females. On the first day, two guest speakers were invited. The first speaker provided insights into the issue of Sexual Violence in Islamic Boarding Schools, understanding sexual violence, and recognizing its various forms. The participants were highly engaged with the speaker's presentations, as issues related to sexual violence have been considered taboo and inappropriate for discussion within Islamic boarding schools. The second speaker discussed the legal assistance process in case of sexual violence, including how to report incidents and recognize instances of sexual violence experienced by friends or individuals in their surroundings.

Figure 1.

Speaker Presentation



On the second day, the community service team assessed the students' understanding by presenting several case studies through video. The students were then asked to analyze and propose solutions to these cases of sexual violence experienced by teenagers. Participants were divided into small groups for discussion and to provide their opinions. The team prepared 10 case studies for analysis by each group. The session concluded with presentations from representatives of each group.

Figure 2.

Representatives of Groups Presenting Video Analysis Results



The final stage is the reflection phase, conducted on Sunday, October 15, 2023. This phase involves the final evaluation of the activities conducted by the community service team. Post-event evaluations were conducted to assess the overall success of the training program. This evaluation included reviewing the achievement of training program objectives, the coverage of the material targets, the students' mastery of the content, and assessing their satisfaction with the entire program through feedback forms. Below are the survey results distributed to the students as part of the program evaluation:

Table 2.

Survey Questionnaire Results

No	Indicator	Percentage	Description
1.	Achievement of training program objectives	95%	Achieved
2.	Achievement of delivered material targets	98%	Achieved
3.	Students' understanding of the material	87%	Understanding
4.	Students' satisfaction with the training program	90%	Satisfied and enjoyable

Discussion

Training in self-defense and legal assistance within pesantren environments serves as a crucial and proactive measure against the pervasive issue of sexual violence. Self-defense training not only imparts practical skills but also empowers participants with knowledge about identifying risky situations and responding effectively in emergencies (Patterson et al., 2020). This aspect of the training is particularly vital in environments like pesantren, where students often reside in communal settings that may pose unique challenges to personal safety awareness and reporting.

Legal assistance, on the other hand, equips individuals with the understanding of their rights as victims of sexual violence and the legal avenues available for seeking justice (Jamaludin, 2022; Swasono et al., 2020). In many cases, victims may not be fully aware of their legal rights or may face obstacles in accessing legal support due to social stigma or

lack of knowledge. By integrating legal education and support into pesantren curricula, these institutions can play a pivotal role in bridging this gap and ensuring that victims receive the necessary assistance promptly.

Moreover, beyond its immediate impact on individual participants, this form of training contributes to broader cultural shifts within pesantren communities. By promoting discussions on healthy behavioral norms and challenging attitudes that perpetuate sexual violence, such initiatives foster a more open and supportive environment (Fadhilah, 2023). These discussions are critical as they address the taboo nature of sexual violence topics in religious educational settings, thereby encouraging dialogue and increasing awareness among both students and staff.

Pesantren, traditionally revered as centers of Islamic learning and moral development, are not immune to the challenges posed by sexual violence. The insulated nature of these communities, coupled with the cultural reluctance to openly discuss sensitive issues, underscores the urgency of implementing preventive measures like self-defense training and legal education (Alfedo, 2022). These initiatives not only safeguard the well-being of students but also uphold the moral imperatives of justice and protection inherent in Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, the role of pesantren extends beyond academic education; they also serve as formative environments for character development among santri. By integrating comprehensive programs for sexual violence prevention, pesantren can instill values of respect, consent, and accountability among their students (Marfu'ah, 2021). This holistic approach not only enhances student safety but also cultivates a generation of young adults who are equipped to promote positive change within their communities.

In Islamic educational settings, including pesantren, addressing sexual violence requires a multifaceted strategy that encompasses legal protections, educational reforms, and community engagement (Fadhilah, 2023). Effective prevention programs should integrate gender justice principles and Islamic ethics into their curricula, ensuring that students

receive a well-rounded education on these critical issues (Jamaludin, 2022). Research underscores the efficacy of such integrated approaches in fostering a supportive and secure learning environment.

In conclusion, training initiatives aimed at preventing sexual violence within pesantren environments are indispensable for creating safer and more inclusive communities. By equipping students with self-defense skills, legal knowledge, and a deeper understanding of gender dynamics, these programs empower individuals to protect themselves and advocate for their rights (Patterson et al., 2020; (Wijayanti et al., 2023). Moreover, by fostering discussions and promoting cultural shifts, pesantren can cultivate environments that prioritize dignity, justice, and respect for all individuals. This comprehensive approach not only enhances student safety but also reinforces the foundational values of Islamic education in fostering compassionate and responsible future leaders.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Through the implementation of self-defense training and legal assistance programs, this community service initiative has played a pivotal role in addressing the pervasive issue of sexual violence within pesantren environments. By equipping students with crucial knowledge and practical skills, such as strategies to avoid risky situations and legal rights awareness, the program has significantly enhanced their ability to protect themselves. The use of the ABCD method facilitated effective community engagement and asset mapping, fostering a supportive environment where awareness and proactive measures against sexual violence are embraced. The program's success is underscored by the marked increase in students' comprehension of sexual violence issues and high levels of participant satisfaction, highlighting its vital contribution to fostering safer and more informed communities within pesantren.

Moving forward, sustaining and expanding these initiatives is crucial for maintaining the momentum in preventing sexual violence in pesantren. Integrating self-defense and legal assistance modules into the regular curriculum or extracurricular activities can embed these skills

further into students' daily lives. Additionally, enhancing comprehensive training to encompass broader themes of gender justice, consent, and healthy relationships rooted in Islamic teachings will deepen understanding and foster a culture of respect. Strengthening partnerships with local authorities, NGOs, and legal institutions will also bolster support systems for victims and ensure swift and just responses to reported cases. Continuous research and evaluation will provide insights into refining strategies and adapting to evolving challenges, while advocacy efforts can raise awareness and mobilize community-wide commitment to preventing sexual violence in religious educational settings.

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